

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the present amendment and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 4-7 are pending in the present application, Claims 1 and 4-6 having been amended, Claim 7 having been withdrawn, and Claims 2 and 3 having been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Support for the present amendment to the claims is found, for example, in original Claims 2 and 3, and in the originally filed specification at page 10, line 22 to page 11, line 4, and page 13, lines 5-13. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Komatsu et al. (U.S. Patent No. 3,930,041, hereinafter "Komatsu") in view of Ando (U.S. Patent No. 3,892,874).

In response to the outstanding rejection of Claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amended Claim 1 recites:

1. A method for manufacturing frozen or refrigerated half-boiled noodles, comprising the steps of:

boiling a measured quantity of beta noodles into a half-boiled state, in which a moisture content of the half-boiled noodles is within a range of 45 to 60 percent as a whole, until outside surfaces of the beta noodles are processed into an outer alpha layer;

packing the half-boiled noodles in a sealed container comprising a food bag made of synthetic resin to hold the half-boiled noodles in a hermetically sealed condition to bring the sealed container into a substantially saturated steamy condition;

slow-cooling the sealed noodles to permeate moisture from the outer alpha layer of the half-boiled noodles into an inside beta part of the half-boiled noodles and to equalize a moisture content; and

preserving the slow-cooled noodles in freezing or refrigerative storage.

As discussed in the specification as originally filed, at page 10, lines 7-21, for a non-limiting embodiment of the claimed invention, the method for manufacturing frozen or refrigerated half-boiled noodles includes boiling a measured quantity of beta noodles into a half-boiled state by a half-boiling process. In the half-boiling process, the beta noodles are boiled until their moisture content is preferably set within the range of 45-60% such that the noodle strings are not broken and boiling time in cooking the produced wrapped noodles is not increased. Additionally, the moisture content suppresses deterioration of the quality of the noodles which is caused by breakage of the noodle texture due to an expansion in volume when the noodles are preserved in freezing storage afterwards.

Turning now to the cited references, Komatsu describes a hermetic sealing process utilizing multiple heat sealing steps. Komatsu describes sealing half-cooked foods, including half cooked noodles.¹

However, Komatsu does not disclose or suggest “boiling a measured quantity of beta noodles into a half-boiled state, in which a moisture content of the half-boiled noodles is within a range of 45 to 60 percent as a whole, until outside surfaces of the beta noodles are processed into an outer alpha layer.”

Instead, Komatsu merely describes that the noodles may be semi-cooked. Komatsu does not describe boiling the noodles such that their moisture content is within a range of 45-60% or that outside surfaces of the beta noodles are processed into an outer alpha layer. Thus, the process described in Komatsu does not improve work efficiency or reduce boiling time in cooking the produced wrapped noodles. Additionally, the process described in Komatsu does not disclose or suggest permeating moisture into the core of the beta noodle, which is not boiled enough, and heating the core with the moisture quickly during a

¹ See Komatsu, at column 8, lines 20-46.

subsequent slow-cooling step. Thus, the moisture content of the semi-cooked noodles described in Komatsu is not equalized.

Additionally, the outstanding Office Action states that Komatsu discloses that “it is sufficient that the temperature adopted at the overpressure cooling step is lower than the temperature at which the vapor present on a sealed interface of the heat sealed sealant, namely 100°C in the case of steam,” and “it is most desired that a cooling press adjusted to 5°C to 25°C is employed.”² However, it is respectfully submitted that the overpressure cooling step of Komatsu is not the slow-cooling of the claimed invention.

Turning now to Ando, Ando describes a method of manufacturing seasoned instant cooking noodles packed in a container. Specifically, Ando relates to instant cooking seasoned noodles, of which a noodle string is processed into an alpha noodle that is more than 90% gelatinized.³ The noodles described in Ando are gelatinized by being fried in oil.

However, Ando does not disclose or suggest “boiling a measured quantity of beta noodles into a half-boiled state, in which a moisture content of the half-boiled noodles is within a range of 45 to 60 percent as a whole, until outside surfaces of the beta noodles are processed into an outer alpha layer.” Instead, as stated above, Ando describes that the noodles are gelatinized to more than 90%. Ando does not describe the technique of half-boiling disclosed by the claimed invention.

Therefore, even assuming the combination of Komatsu and Ando to be proper, it is respectfully submitted that neither Ando nor Komatsu discloses or suggests the “boiling a measured quantity of beta noodles into a half-boiled state, in which a moisture content of the half-boiled noodles is within a range of 45 to 60 percent as a whole, until outside surfaces of the beta noodles are processed into an outer alpha layer;” as recited in amended Claim 1.

² See the outstanding Office Action, at page 3.

³ See Ando, at column 3, lines 12-20.

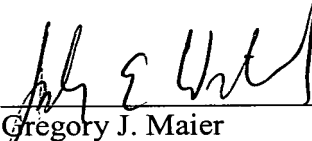
Application No. 10/670,603
Reply to Office Action of November 14, 2006.

Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the outstanding rejection of Claims 1-6 as unpatentable over Komatsu in view of Ando be withdrawn.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. A notice of allowance is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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